

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KUWAIT 01941 121458Z
ACTION SS-25

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P R 121430Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7730
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T KUWAIT 1941

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, KU, UR
SUBJECT: GOK PURCHASE OF SOVIET MISSILES

REF: (A) STATE 72305, (B) MANAMA 760, (C) JIDDA 2507

1. I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH FONMIN FOR APRIL 13 AT WHICH I WILL CARRY OUT INSTRUCTIONS CONTAINED IN PARA 2 OF REF A. AS I HAD INDICATED IN REF B, I TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE DEFENSE MINISTER SHAIKH SA'AD AL ABDULLA WITH AN ADVANCE BRIEFING ON THIS DEMARCHE TODAY (APRIL 12).

2. AS WAS EXPECTED, HE DID NOT SHARE USG VIEWS ON GOK PURCHASE OF SOVIET MISSILES WHICH I OUTLINED TO HIM. SHAIKH SA'AD MAINTAINED THAT THERE WAS NO NEED FOR USG TO BE DISTURBED ABOUT THIS PURCHASE. HE BELIEVED IT WAS IN KUWAIT'S INTEREST TO MAKE ITSELF AS STRONG AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST ANY AGGRESSION. HE SAW THE ROLE OF THE SOVIET MISSILES, PARTICULARLY THE FROGS, AS A DETERRENT

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WHICH WOULD MAKE AN UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBOR (READ IRAQ) THINK MORE THAN TWICE BEFORE ATTACKING KUWAIT, SINCE LATTER COULD RETALIATE WITHIN AGRESSOR'S TERRITORY.

3. I TOLD SHAIKH SA'AD THAT, WHILE I UNDERSTOOD HIS REASONING, I DID NOT SHARE HIS CONVICTION THAT SMALL NUMBER OF MISSILES IN KUWAITI ARSENAL WOULD BE AN EFFECTIVE

DETERRENT TO LARGER POWER EQUIPPED WITH THESE AND EVEN MORE SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS. I REPEATED MY VIEW THAT THE FROG MISSILES COULD BE CONSIDERED AS OFFENSIVE WEAPONS AND AS POTENTIALLY PROVACATIVE TO AN UNFRIENDLY NEIGHBOR.

4. WHILE OUR DISCUSSION ON THIS SUBJECT CONTINUED FOR ABOUT A HALF AN HOUR, SHAIKH SA'AD ESSENTIALLY REPEATED THE ABOVE ARGUMENTS. I TOLD HIM THAT, WHILE WE FULLY RECOGNIZE KUWAIT'S SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO PURCHASE ARMS FROM WHOMEVER IT WISHED, HE FELT THAT THE ACQUISITION BY KUWAIT OF THESE WEAPONS COULD HAVE A DESTABLIZING EFFECT ON THE SECURITY AND POLITICAL TRANQUILITY OF THE GULF WHICH WE FELT WOULD BE BETTER SERVED BY KUWAIT'S REVERSING ITS DECISION TO PURCHASE THE FROG AND STRELLA MISSILES. SHAIKH SA'AD COMPLAINED THAT WE WOULD NOT SELL HIM THE KIND OF WEAPONS WHICH HE FELT WERE NECESSARY FOR KUWAIT'S DEFENSE AND THAT, THEREFORE, HE WOULD HAVE TO OBTAIN THEM ELSEWHERE.

5. I CONCLUDED THE DISCUSSION BY ASSURING SHAIKH SA'AD THAT OUR CONCERN IN THIS MATTER RESULTED FROM OUR INTEREST IN KUWAIT AS A FRIENDLY COUNTRY AND IN THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF THE GULF AREA. IT WAS OUR FEELING THAT THIS PEACE AND STABILITY COULD BE BEST PRESERVED BY AVOIDING ANY POTENTIAL PROVOCATIONS. IT WAS, THEREFORE, MY GOVERNMENT'S HOPE THAT GOK WOULD REVIEW THIS DECISION TO PURCHASES THESE SOVIET MISSILES WITH A VIEW TO CANCELLING THE CONTRACT. I EXPLAINED THAT, WHILE THIS WAS A MATTER WHICH I WOULD BE RAISING WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER THE FOLLOWING DAY, I DID WANT TO PROVIDE HIM WITH THIS PREVIEW
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SINCE IT WAS HE WHO HAD SUPPLIED ME THE INFORMATION CONCERNING THE PURCHASE.

6. COMMENT: SHAIKH SA'AD SEEMED TO BE UNMOVED BY THE ARGUMENTS PRESENTED FOR CANCELLING THE PURCHASE OF THE SOVIET MISSILES. IT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY HE, AS DEFENSE MINISTER, WHO PUSHED VERY HARD FOR THEIR PURCHASE AND PROBABLY HAD TO OVERCOME SOME OBJECTION IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. NEVERTHELESS, I THINK THAT IT WAS WORTHWHILE IN TERMS OF MY OWN RELATIONS WITH SHAIKH SA'AD TO HAVE RAISED THIS MATTE INITIALLY WITH HIM. I WILL MAKE A MORE FORMAL PRESENTATION TO FONMIN SHAIKH SABAH AL-AHMAD TOMORROW, WHO WILL PRESUMABLY BE FOREWARNED AND POSSIBLY IN A POSITION TO GIVE ME MORE OFFICIAL REACTION TO THESE REPRESENTATIONS.
MAESTRONE

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NNN

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